

# Northampton Policing Review Full Commission Meeting

MEETING AGENDA  
Tuesday, December 22, 2020  
6-9pm  
Remote Meeting

**Join the Remote Meeting:**

**Video conference:**

<https://zoom.us/j/97175129614?pwd=ZFZkMmMrSTITWIBeck5YaUVLNklwQT09>

**Or by telephone, call:** +1(929)436-2866 Meeting ID: 971 7512 9614 Passcode: 700249

1. Call to Order
  - a. Announcement of Zoom Recording
  - b. Roll Call
2. Approval of Meeting Minutes
3. Public comment (30 minutes)
4. Discussion of chairing system, and election of chair(s)
5. Outreach working group update
6. Sub-Committee Updates
7. Discussion of anonymity during comments/submitting statements
8. Preliminary Report
9. New Business
10. Adjourn

## **MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Dan Cannity at 6:02 PM.

## **ANNOUNCEMENT OF ZOOM RECORDING**

Commissioner Dan Cannity made an announcement that this meeting was being recorded for the public record and would be available on Northampton Open Media, as well as, the City of Northampton website.

## **Roll Call**

Lois Ahrens	present
Elizabeth Barajas-Roman	arrived at 6:15pm
Booker Bush	arrived at 6:13pm
Daniel Cannity (co-chair)	present
Nick Fleisher	arrived 6:08pm
David Hoose	present
Alex Jarrett	present
Javier Luengo-Garrido	present
Nnamdi Pole	present
Michael Quinlan	arrived at 7:05pm
Josey Rosales	present
Cynthia Suopis	present
Carol Owen	present

## **Public Comment**

Community member Hildegard Freedman shared a story about a neighbor needing assistance. She said there are other ways to handle situations than police.

Community member Richard Hendrick read a written piece including the names of black people who have died at the hands of police.

Community member Marian Van Arsdell said she is speaking from a place of white privilege and that she takes seriously how we can make this community safer for everyone and that everyone should feel as comfortable as she does in Northampton. She mentioned she attended one of the rallies in Northampton and that when she saw the number of people that were there, that she was afraid of entering into this space, and that as it got louder and more antagonistic, that that was reassuring to her to see the NPD presence.

## **3. Discussion of chairing system, and election of chair(s)**

Commissioner Dan Cannity set the discussion about electing a new chair, and asked if there were any changes the commission would like to make to the chairing system structure.

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido asked Commissioner Dan whether his position has changed in any way.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said his position hasn't changed in that doesn't want to be the only chair. He said he would be vice chair or cochair but is fine with whatever structure. He said he would like some balance and someone to bounce ideas off with.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett said he's been happy with Commissioner Dan and Commissioner Dana as well as the structure. He said the structure is in the document that constituted the commission and that city councillors can't be cochairs. He asked whether Commissioner Dan could speak to whether the commission will be filling Commissioner Dana's position as well as Commissioner Carmen's position.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said he and Commissioner Dana decided not to replace Commissioner Carmen as it would be too much to bring someone in. He said the commission could ask the Council President and the Mayor to assign someone if the commission wanted to. He wondered about bringing someone in when so much work has been done already.

Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman said she wanted to bring up that she's the only woman of color on the commission. She said the demographic shape of the commission is no longer the same as when it started and as it stands, it's going to become an issue in the validity of the commission's process. She said in terms of the practices the commission has been instituting this far in regards to the length of meetings and the meetings timing is something of which to take note. She said here's something to be said about how the commission is losing some of the voices it said was so important that we wanted to hear from. She said, in these large meetings people raise their hands, the commission used to ask people to step back and make sure all of these voices are heard. She said this is fundamental to the makeup of this commission and how we move forward.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said he can ask the city and put requirements on the hiring process, and to ask for a person of color to get balance back in the ratio and think about the specific subcommittees that Dana was on.

Commissioner Lois Ahrens agreed and said it makes a difference because the women that have left are women of color and are young. She said that's two parts of the balance that have been thrown off. She said she thinks however the person comes on, will now have a better understanding of the time commitment as well as thinking about how to get them up to speed.

Commissioner David Hoose said he doesn't see any downside in asking to replace someone. He said he agrees with everything Commissioner Elizabeth and Commissioner Lois said. He said there are women who have been a part of speak outs and public comments that could be considered for that role. He said he's hoping that one of the women on this commission remaining would volunteer to be co-chair with Commissioner Dan.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis said she thinks the commission should have another co-chair and that it should preferably be a person of color. She said she wants to make sure that the commission didn't say or do anything or moved in a particular direction that allowed the commission to lose these women.

Commissioner Dan Cannity named child care, and workload as two of the main reasons why both commissioners left the commission. He said women of color are burdened with emotional labor outside of working hours. He said the commission can reexamine this, especially if people are having a hard time making meetings, to accommodate folks with different schedules.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher agreed with Commissioner David Hoose . He said he thinks Commissioner Dan needs a cochair. He said there were Sixty-five applicants for the commission which is how Commissioner Carol was brought onto the commission part of the way in. He said, the people who originally applied would probably be strong candidates and may be people who have been on the public comment. He would welcome a replacement.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett said paying people for their time and reimbursing them for childcare may be something funding from an organization could assist with. He said the commission could look further into this to help support members.

Commissioner Dan Cannity asked whether the commission knew any any such groups.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett offered to look back in his records.

Commissioner Lois Ahrens mentioned the Markham-Nathan fund as a potential opportunity for funding, and said they may have an open application because of COVID.

Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman said the community foundation of Western Mass might be able to provide support work for this particular moment. She said another factor that makes this position hard is the topic of revisiting trauma with the police. She said it is difficult to serve on this commission, having to do deep dive investigations, and that there's a lot required for people of color to show up here, which shouldn't be ignored.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said he will reach out to groups that might be able to provide support for childcare and will make a request to the City Council president and Mayor to replace Commissioner Dana and Commissioner Carmen, with a preference for younger women of color and parents.

Commissioner Dan Cannity asked whether any of the commissioners would like to be cochair in the meantime. He said he would like to offer the position to Commissioner Elizabeth.

Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman said thank you but she'd rather not as it is too much for her to take on right now.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said he will reach out to the President and the Mayor and will revisit this on January 5th.

## **5. Outreach Committee**

Commissioner Dan Cannity said he received confirmation from the city solicitor that the outreach group would officially be a subcommittee. He said this committee would focus on connecting with marginalized populations and folks who can't attend public hearings due to fear of retribution. He said the commission can form a subcommittee or the commission can delegate individual tasks for commissioners to do alone.

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido said he advocates for a specific subcommittee because the testimonies would need to keep the same form and that there may be an imbalance in the way the testimonies are collected.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis asked whether individuals would be physically going into the community. She said as a member of the board of health, she reminded the commissioners about COVID.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said this work would look like building relationships with groups that are already working with people in person, which could minimize risk by not gathering people in large groups. He said likely yes at some point it would be helpful to be in person, but it's not a requirement.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher asked whether the subcommittee would be following open meeting law.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said the subcommittee would be subject to open meeting law.

Commissioners Javier Luengo-Garrido , Carol Owens, and Dan Cannity volunteered to be on the outreach committee.

Commissioner Dan Cannity **motioned to create an outreach subcommittee. Commissioner Booker Bush seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.**

## **5. Sub-Committee Updates**

### Alternatives Subcommittee

Noa Coffey-Moore pulls up the Alternatives to Policing subcommittee preliminary report draft.

The commissioners from the Alternatives to Policing subcommittee review the document.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said the commission still doesn't have something we're working towards and asks what the commission's vision of Northampton it's moving toward and that they haven't answered this question yet. He said this conversation is worth having.

Commissioner Booker Bush said he sees the process as something the commission moves towards, and doesn't see it as abolitionist, and sees things changing in a gradual fashion.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett read from the draft document, and said "we need to creatively design a department of Community Care that is accountable and transparent to the community and where the voice of the executive branch is one among many." He said this is something academics, activists and civil servants struggle with how to change our public safety system and reduce the footprint of police. He said although the commission is putting in a great amount of time and doing great research, it's not going to be able to come up with all the answers in the time that it has. He said his thought is that there is a city department with paid staff that has an advisory board, that moves on this issue and starts with the low hanging fruit and starts with the things that have the most evidence.

Commissioner Carol Owens mentioned her report and a section that talked about disinvestment over a 30 year period in various human services and mental health services and to recommend a bill right away for the city to start rebuilding capacity in these areas.

Commissioner Javier mentioned that the commission hasn't decided how they're making decisions like this, for instance deciding by a vote, by consensus or by majority wins. He said this is some of what complicates the process. He said this is something the full commission should talk about further.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis said there should be a department that is in the executive branch where some of the ideas mentioned in the alternatives committee can be put. She said she would love to see this highlighted. She said it's part of the commission's responsibility to recommend how to enact it's findings. She said they will be incremental, but she believes a department that really isn't run by the police department to make these things happen.

Commissioner Elizabeth said she's not sure the commission will be able to agree. She said she's not in support of a 20 year disinvestment. She said the commission is assuming the values first, but that it hasn't talked about values. She wondered whether the commission can have a conversation about values to guide the principles around what it's hoping to create.

Commissioner Michael Quinlan said in a number of cases there are offices in the executive branch that have advisory committees. He said he sees an office of community care as an interesting idea. He said he wondered whether there wouldn't be another opportunity to have a resident committee devoted to advising that office as well as interfacing with the Human Rights Commission.

Commissioner Lois Ahrens said she doesn't think we can have a 30 year disinvestment. She said the only principled way that will build capacity is to do some of the things the commission will agree on is disinvestment in the police and reinvestment are things that are now falling to the police. She said in terms of a Department of Community Care, she likes the idea and she hopes the commission can come up with guideposts, as well as what it would like to see happen in a certain amount of time. She said there is precedent in the Arts council that is an advisory group that also raises money and creates its own programs.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said the commission should continue to look into where there are funds in the city, specifically looking at reinvestment, as well as what the scope of that department would be, whether there is precedence to start a pilot. He said they will need to know what the commission is recommending is important to this process.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher wondered how the commission will agree on a process for the interim report.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said he sees the preliminary report as a progress report to say this is the work that the commission has done, these are the avenues that we are exploring, but this is far from a final recommendation.

The commissioners discuss the format and process of writing the preliminary report.

Policies and Services Subcommittee

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole we were tasked with looking at existing policies and services of the NPD. and looked specifically into Traffic, Mental health services, Domestic Violence, sexual assault. He explained, the committee members outlined what is happening within the department in each of these topics. Dipped into alternatives that would be a good contract. Trying to work towards contributing to the report.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher added the subcommittee is interested in following the Grievance complaint procedure, and the lack of citizen oversight as well as the NPD strategic plan. He said the committee is beginning to have parallel work with the Alternatives to Policing subcommittee, and that there needs to be a conversation about sharing information between two committees.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said he wrote a one page summary about the school resource officer (SRO). He said one important piece is that the Chief of Police is supposed to appoint a School Resource officer, unless there's an exception. He said it's helpful to know what the constraining policies are to know whether you're working uphill against a policy that mandates otherwise.

Commissioner Booker Bush wondered whether the Policing Policies committee can continue to work on the SRO issue.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said he can take the lead on SROs and wondered whether Commissioner David Hoose would take the lead on traffic.

Commissioner David Hoose confirmed.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis said her report was on domestic violence. She said after looking at all policies and procedures in NPD, she discovered in 2019, of the 18,000 hours of training, 159 hours were on domestic violence. She said her next question is to investigate what the training was.

Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman said in the exploration around current policies, part of this work is about uncovering the arguments that are made for having police. She said for instance, sexual assault and domestic violence are some of arguments as to why we can't be without police. She said part of the investigation is trying to put some data behind the argument.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole wondered about mental health and how it overlaps with the assessment of quality of training for police officers.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher mentioned thinking about a department that could oversee a different model in terms of mental health, that would also focus on dispatch as a very important component of any model because dispatch is the front door. As far as training goes, he said he thinks it's far better than it used to be, but he's not clear what trainings are useful.

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido said he feels confused. He said he asked Commissioner Nnamdi if they were looking into alternatives and that he said no at a previous meeting. He said he was looking forward to working on some of the things that were offered to the other committee.

Commissioner Booker Bush agreed and said this topic deserves more discussion.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher said he thinks the commission needs to be cognizant that the Alternatives committee is the home for alternatives, but that the Policing Policies and Services subcommittee may have ideas that contribute to that.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said they should prioritize existing policies whenever possible because it's not work that other committees are doing.

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido said that if overlap happens, it needs to be brought to the commission to have a conversation about the process.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett noted the time and mentioned the importance of talking about the preliminary report.

#### Spending & Contracts Subcommittee

Commissioner Dan Cannity said the subcommittee is in somewhat of a holding pattern but did get back some of the data about how the city allocated its funds and what police are paid. He said the subcommittee is comparing how police have been funded in comparison to other groups, and is looking to clarify why the police budget has increased while other budgets have not. He said the subcommittee has started looking into how police account for their time.

Commissioner Lois said the subcommittee is looking into private property checks, as well as self-initiated investigation of "suspicious activities".

### **7. Adjourn**

**Commissioner Dan Cannity moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:04pm. Commissioner Carol Owens seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.**